

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A sputtering target prepared by the butt joining of metal sheets being made of the same material, wherein an intermetallic compound in a joined portion has an average particle diameter of 60% to 130% of the average particle diameter of the intermetallic compound in a non-joined portion,

wherein the joined portion is produced by friction stir welding and has a structure characteristic of the recrystallization of the material of the joined portion by annealing and substantially without a crystal orientation characteristic of plastic flow due to friction stir welding.

Claim 2 (Currently Amended): A sputtering target prepared by the butt joining of metal sheets being made of the same material, wherein the average distance between adjacent intermetallic compound particles in a joined portion is 60% to 130% of the average distance between adjacent intermetallic compound particles in a non-joined portion,

wherein the joined portion is produced by friction stir welding and has a structure characteristic of the recrystallization of the material of the joined portion by annealing and substantially without a crystal orientation characteristic of plastic flow due to friction stir welding.

Claim 3 (Currently Amended): A sputtering target prepared by the butt joining of metal sheets being made of the same material, wherein the average of the grain diameter of metallic crystals in a joined portion is 20% to 500% of the average of the grain diameter of metallic crystals in a non-joined portion,

wherein the joined portion is produced by friction stir welding and has a structure characteristic of the recrystallization of the material of the joined portion by annealing and substantially without a crystal orientation characteristic of plastic flow due to friction stir welding.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended): A sputtering target prepared by the butt joining of metal sheets being made of the same material, wherein no dendritic structure is generated in a joined portion,

wherein the joined portion is produced by friction stir welding and has a recrystallized structure characteristic of annealing and substantially without a crystal orientation characteristic of plastic flow due to friction stir welding.

Claim 5 (Previously Presented): The sputtering target according to claim 1, comprising one element selected from the group consisting of aluminum, an aluminum alloy, copper, a copper alloy, silver, and a silver alloy.

Claim 6 (Previously Presented): The sputtering target according to claim 1, comprising a planar area of 1 m^2 or more.

Claims 7-11 (Cancelled).

Claim 12 (Previously Presented): The sputtering target according to claim 2, comprising one element selected from the group consisting of aluminum, an aluminum alloy, copper, a copper alloy, silver, and a silver alloy.

Claim 13 (Previously Presented): The sputtering target according to claim 3, comprising one element selected from the group consisting of aluminum, an aluminum alloy, copper, a copper alloy, silver, and a silver alloy.

Claim 14 (Previously Presented): The sputtering target according to claim 4, comprising one element selected from the group consisting of aluminum, an aluminum alloy, copper, a copper alloy, silver, and a silver alloy.

Claim 15 (Previously Presented): The sputtering target according to claim 2, comprising a planar area of 1 m^2 or more.

Claim 16 (Previously Presented): The sputtering target according to claim 3, comprising a planar area of 1 m^2 or more.

Claim 17 (Previously Presented): The sputtering target according to claim 4, comprising a planar area of 1 m^2 or more.

Claims 18-20 (Cancelled).